



[The Rosetta Stone](#): One text, three languages

Salama

An example

Hugh Tweedie has contributed the following link:

<http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/salama/index.html>

The linked web site appears to present an automatic generator of dictionaries, which would in principle be a good thing, and a very good thing.

But it is not very clear as to whether these are what it calls “monolingual” dictionaries (i.e. proper dictionaries that define words in the language itself), or whether they are dictionaries

which are definitions of words in English. If the latter is the case, then one would want to look elsewhere, because the mediation of languages via English translation is not really what we want in the post-colonial time.

This would seem to be confirmed on the Salama web site under “dictionary compilation” where it says:

“Application to other languages

“The system can currently be applied to the compilation of dictionaries between Swahili and any other language, provided that a conversion dictionary between English and the target language is available. Using an electronic conversion dictionary, most of the English glosses can be converted into the target language. Manual editing is needed for checking and correcting the result, because only part of lexical data can be converted in this way.”

The English language therefore becomes the medium and the yardstick of the other language. Which is not such a good thing, after all.

The Rosetta Stone

The rediscovery in 1799 of the “Rosetta Stone”, by a soldier in Napoleon Bonaparte’s invading force in Egypt, with one text on it in three ancient languages, led to the deciphering of two ancient Egyptian scripts, arranged in a very early form of “Cross-Language”.

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